DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 444 307 EC 307 997

TITLE Part C Annual Performance Report, State of Missouri, July 1, 1997-September 30, 1998.

INSTITUTION Missouri State Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education, Jefferson City. Div. of Special Education.; Missouri State Dept. of Health, Jefferson City.; Missouri State Dept. of Mental Health, Jefferson City.; Missouri State Dept. of Social Services, Jefferson City.

PUB DATE 1998-00-00

NOTE 12p.

PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS *Agency Cooperation; Credentials; *Delivery Systems; *Disabilities; Early Identification; *Early Intervention; Infants; *Integrated Services; Models; *Program Evaluation; Program Implementation; Toddlers

IDENTIFIERS Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Part C; *Missouri

ABSTRACT

This annual report details the July 1, 1997-September 30, 1998 activities of First Steps, a system of early intervention services for Missouri children with disabilities, developmental delays, or special health care needs from birth to age three and their families. First Steps is a cooperative, collaborative, interagency effort of the state departments of Elementary and Secondary Education, Health, Mental Health, and Social Services, parents, and Missouri's public and private service provider network. The report describes the roles of the different state agencies involved with First Steps, results of interagency agreements and interagency collaboration, innovative service delivery models that have improved the quality of early intervention services in the natural environment, and sources of funding and other support. Disputes filed with the state over provision of early intervention services and the outcomes of the cases are noted. The report also discusses barriers, challenges, and future actions related to interagency coordination. A final section includes a description of the state's credentialing system for early intervention professionals and assistants. (CR)

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PART C ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT
STATE OF MISSOURI
JULY 1, 1997 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30, 1998

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WHAT IS FIRST STEPS?

First Steps is Missouri's implementation of Part H (subsequently Part C) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). It is a system of early intervention services for children with disabilities, developmental delays or special health care needs from birth to age three and their families. First Steps began as a pilot project in 1988 and became fully implemented in 1994. First Steps is a cooperative, collaborative, interagency effort of the state departments of Elementary and Secondary Education, Health, Mental Health, and Social Services, parents and Missouri's public and private service provider network.

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STATE AGENCIES INVOLVED WITH FIRST STEPS

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)

DESE is designated as the lead agency for Missouri's early intervention system. DESE's Division of Special Education, Early Childhood Special Education section provides coordination, leadership, and technical assistance for the Part C (First Steps) system and special education services available through local school districts for 3-5 year-olds.

Departments of Health and Mental Health

The Departments of Health and Mental Health receive referrals for First Steps, determine eligibility, and provide service coordination for children and their families throughout the evaluation process and the child's participation in First Steps. Early Intervention Services are provided in accordance with IFSPs and state contracting procedures. Part C funds a staff position in each agency to provide administrative guidance and support to their regional offices.

Department of Social Services

The Division of Medical Services coordinates the interagency efforts for the implementation of Early Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) and the payment of specified early intervention services covered by Title XIX of the federal Social Security Act (Medicaid).

Employees of the Division of Family Services participate in the referral and Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) process for those children who are receiving their services.

INTERAGENCY AGREEMENTS

The Division's services are primarily supported by federal funds appropriated in accordance with provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

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The Departments of Elementary and Secondary Education, Health, Mental Health, and Social Services have a signed interagency agreement outlining the fiscal policies, financial responsibilities, and resolution of intra-agency and interagency disputes.

RESULTS OF INTERAGENCY AGREEMENTS AND INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION

1. **CHANGES IN MEDICAID FUNDING:** The State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) recommended changes in Medicaid funding to encourage the provision of services in natural environments. Using First Steps funding policies as a guide, Missouri Medicaid now provides the same incentive for providers who travel to the natural environment: an additional $2.50 per 15 minutes of service. This change, together with the MC+ For Children expansion, which will cover children up to 300% of the poverty level, should increase the level of Medicaid support for early intervention services.

2. **REQUEST FOR STATE FUNDS:** Representatives of the Departments of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), Health (DOH), and Mental Health (DMH) worked together to project the need for additional funding to support the cost of First Steps services and formulate a budget request for the Missouri Legislature. A request for state funds was approved for FY 1998 ($1.6 million) and FY 1999 ($8.2 million).

3. **APPROPRIATE SERVICES FOR YOUNG CHILDREN WITH AUTISM:** Representatives of DESE, DMH, and DOH worked together to clarify procedures for the provision of appropriate early intervention services for young children with autism.

4. **FIRST STEPS SYSTEM REDESIGN:** The SICC assisted DESE in writing an Invitation for Bid for consultants to facilitate a redesign of the First Steps system. The purpose of the redesign efforts is to assist the Lead agency (DESE), the SICC, and local planners to assure compliance with federal and state regulations, program improvement, quality, cost and data issues. Sue Mackey Andrews, Principal Investigator with *Solutions*, was awarded the bid in July, 1998.

INNOVATIVE SERVICE DELIVERY MODELS

1. **Natural Environment Enhancement Grants:** Four sites received Environment Enhancement Grants for projects that improve the quality of early intervention services in the natural environment:

    - Ability Network provides First Steps services to children in 41 rural counties in Missouri. This grant helped provide support, information, and resources to staff and families. A comprehensive resource directory, a centralized data base, and a resource library were developed as a result of the grant.

    - The Child Day Care Association's First Steps Project provided support to, and advocacy for, all parties involved in finding and providing child care for children, ages birth to 3 with special needs within the St Louis area. Families who choose to use this service received

enhanced resource and referral services, education on choosing quality care, home visitation and consultation, and advocacy under the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA). Consultation was also available to child care providers.

- The Sunshine Center in Independence utilized this grant to develop and conduct training for child care providers in the community. The goal was to enhance the capacity and comfort level of staff for providing childcare services to children with special needs.

- Missouri Easter Seal Society in St. Louis, developed Project Outreach to demonstrate methods for providing comprehensive family-centered services to First Steps eligible children residing in under-served, low economic status populations. The project involved Missouri Easter Seal Society (St. Louis Region) and Kingdom House, a family support center with a large day care program. Paraprofessionals from the community assisted in providing in-home early intervention services. First Steps child find efforts were enhanced by this project as well.

2. **The Family Enhancement Project** of the Puckett Institute, Morganton, North Carolina conducted workshops for two agencies who provide early intervention services in Missouri:

- Sunshine Center in Independence, Missouri concentrated their efforts on providing early intervention services in community settings such as day care centers, parks etc. A system for mapping natural community supports was developed and implemented.

- Belle Center in St Louis utilized the training to help staff further develop, expand and address family driven issues and interventions that are also community responsive. Staff are more conscious of families needs and requests and have focused on team building as a way to build the capacity of both families and the community.

SOURCES OF FUNDING AND OTHER SUPPORT

The following fiscal resources are used to provide early intervention services in Missouri:

Federal

- Title V of the Social Security Act (relating to Maternal and Child Health)
- Title XIX of the Social Security Act (relating to the General Medicaid Program and EPSDT)
- Part H (later named Part C) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) *See section on use of Part C funds. These funds support the administrative infrastructure of First Steps in addition to early intervention services.*

State and Local

- General Revenue funds: This category includes $1,282,007 in maintenance of effort from the Department of Mental Health and a supplemental allocation from the Missouri Legislature of $1,633,502.

- Private insurance, with written parental consent unless eligible for Medicaid (Title XIX) or the Children's Program administered by the Bureau of Special Health Care Needs (Title V)
- County tax monies (Senate Bill 40)
- Private agency support
- Local foundations, including United Way

ANALYSIS OF DISPUTES FILED WITH THE STATE

I. **Child Complaints**

Filed:	July 27, 1998
Decision:	September 21, 1998 (within 60 day time-line)
Issue:	Failure of IEP team to consider parent's request for 24-hour nursing care as early intervention service. Department of Health found out of compliance. Corrective action ordered.

Filed:	December 22, 1997
Decision:	January 30, 1998
Issue:	Violation of time-lines to conduct evaluation and hold IFSP meeting. Department of Health found out of compliance. Corrective action ordered.

Filed:	April 27, 1998
Decision:	June 17, 1998
Issue:	Failure to conduct on-going assessment including a development assessment prior to IFSP meeting. Department of Health found out of compliance. Corrective action ordered.

II. **Mediations** - None

III. **Due Process Hearing Decisions**

Filed:	May 29, 1998
Decision:	July 10, 1998 (timelines extended upon parent request)
Issue:	Eligibility for Part C services; child found ineligible by Department of Mental Health. Hearing officer determined child did not meet state eligibility criteria.

REFERRALS TO FIRST STEPS

Anyone can make a referral to First Steps. Usually, these referrals come from parents or one of the numerous Missouri programs that participate in child-find efforts to identify eligible children that may

be in need of early intervention services. Participants in the child-find system include, but are not limited to:

- Head Start
- public school early childhood screening programs (Parents as Teachers)
- county health departments
- Healthy Children and Youth Screening (HCY) through Medicaid
- local early intervention programs
- hospitals
- community physicians

Referrals are made to either the Bureau of Special Health Care Needs Regional Offices for the Department of Health, or to Regional Centers for the Department of Mental Health, Division of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities.

BARRIERS, CHALLENGES, FUTURE STEPS/ACTIONS RELATED TO INTERAGENCY COORDIANTION

Missouri is currently undergoing an intensive study of the First Steps early intervention system. This redesign activity stems from concerns that the system was challenged by the natural environment requirements included in the 1997 Reauthorization of IDEA and that program costs were escalating with enrollment remaining static. The redesign process requires that each agency renew their commitment to First Steps, implement change to the service delivery system in good faith, and commit to fully incorporating all regulatory requirements as defined by both state and federal regulations. There is also a need to improve data collection and to streamline the entry into the system. This redesign effort is headed by a task force that will present recommendations to the SICC in July, 1999. Anticipated changes include streamlined administrative procedures and intensive CSPD activities targeted to support the changes to the system.

A second study is underway by order of the Missouri legislature. This study, conducted by the University of Missouri-Columbia, is to make recommendations concerning lead agency designation, eligibility criteria, acceptable intensive early intervention practices, transition out of First Steps into early childhood special education, development of an early intervention service catalog, suggested changes to Medicaid rules, and assist with the development of standardized fiscal reporting for expenditures. The impact of this study is unknown at this time.

ISSUES IDENTIFIED IN MONITORING CONDUCTED BY THE STATE

DESE conducted the initial monitoring for compliance to state and federal regulation in 1996. On-site file reviews were conducted at all regional offices of the Department of Mental Health, Division of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities and the Department of Health, Bureau of Special Health Care Needs. Significant systems issues found out of compliance at both agencies included:

- Written notices and consents for evaluations and early intervention services
- 45-day timelines for evaluation and IFSP development

- Adequate written notification of the IFSP meeting
- A document consistently called an IFSP containing all 9 required components
- Documentation of service coordination as an early intervention service
- Documentation that required developmental assessments were conducted

DESE staff also found significant problems with the appropriate application of the eligibility criteria and the documentation of unique development needs.

Both agencies implemented corrective action plans that addressed the above listed concerns. Corrective actions included the designation of a local contact for the supervision of service coordinators, training, peer review of files, adoption of a common IFSP format, and internal self-monitoring. Intensive training and technical assistance was provided by the lead agency in response to the monitoring finding. Follow-up site visits have been conducted at approximately half of the regional offices. As of September 30, 1998, all but one office had made significant improvement and are presently in compliance to state and federal regulation. The remaining offices will receive a follow up review by the end of the 1999 calendar year. The new cycle of monitoring begins in 2000.

The Part C system is currently undergoing a systems change process that began in August, 1998. Supervision and monitoring will be modified to support the changes made in the system of early intervention services. At this time, the lead agency is exploring the development of a desk review system and interview method of monitoring. Expected completion of the systems change effort is early fall, 1999 with a strategic phase in of change.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF MISSOURI'S EARLY INTERVENTION SYSTEM

PUBLIC AWARENESS

- **Legislative Awareness**: Training was provided to LICCs and parents for the purpose of increasing awareness about First Steps. Special emphasis was placed on informing legislators about the benefits of early intervention and the First Steps system. Public awareness training was held regionally to increase participation of LICCs. Dates and location of training are listed below:

    - October 20, 1997 Cape Girardeau
    - November 10, 1997 St. Louis
    - November 18, 1997 Blue Springs
    - November 19, 1997 Springfield

  Parents and mentors were also provided support to attend conferences such as Linking Families and Partnerships for Progress.
- **First Steps Day, 1998:** Governor Mel Carnahan declared April 22, 1998 as First Steps Day. This was the third consecutive year that First Steps has received this recognition. LICCs across the state utilized this event to increase public awareness about early intervention services.

- **LICC Update and First Steps News:** A new quarterly newsletter, " LICC Update" was developed and disseminated to LICCs and the SICC to increase awareness of LICC and First Steps related

activities. In addition, DESE continues to widely distribute it's quarterly newsletter, "First Steps News" to parents, providers, service coordinators, and others interested in early intervention issues across the state.

TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE:

Parents as Teachers (PAT) Supplementary Guide: Staff from DESE and the PAT National Center developed a publication entitled "Supporting Families of Children with Special Needs" The target audience for the guide is parent educators in Missouri's Parents as Teachers program. This document will assist parent educators in the efforts to work with families dually enrolled in First Steps and PAT.

Provider Connections: A new annual publication was disseminated in September 1997 to provide technical assistance to First Steps providers.

Partnerships for Progress: This annual statewide conference was held in Columbia, August 12-14, 1998. This was the last Partnerships Conference. The state First Steps team will continue to explore other, more cost effective and productive ways to provide training and increased awareness related to early intervention and early childhood special education.

DESE and Center for Innovations in Special Education (CISE) sponsored two early intervention related workshops: Two workshops were developed and provided throughout the state by DESE and CISE. "Piecing it Together - Missouri's First Steps System", was presented in Independence, Warrensburg, Cape Girardeau, Columbia, Springfield, and St. Louis. "Movin ON": IFSP-IEP Transition", was presented in Columbia, House Springs, and Kansas City.

IFSP Training: In July 1997, service coordinators received training on the IFSP process. This was a train-the-trainer model, and participants utilized the curriculum to conduct training in their home regions of the state.

PARTICIPATION IN GRANT PROJECTS THAT ENHANCE EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES:

Project STEPS: Missouri participates in Project Steps (Sequenced Transition to Education in the Public Schools), a grant project through Project STEPS, University of Kentucky, Lexington KY. Four local community teams received training in November 1997 and four additional sites were selected for training in August of 1998. The interagency state transition team is named MOST (Missouri State Transition) Team.

SCRIPT: SCRIPT stands for Supporting Change and Reform in Interprofessional Preservice Training. Missouri's SCRIPT team, with support from the Frank Porter Graham Center , University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, actively explores ways to improve the quality of early intervention and early childhood education by enhancing preservice training for people in related fields. Some activities of the team included:

- Planning and conducting a Higher Education Institute in September, 1998.

- Planning training for family members who want to assist with higher education and other types of training by sharing their experiences.
- Revising and developing a system for utilizing First Steps training materials which were developed in the early stages of the program.

Opening Doors in Rural Communities: Missouri continued it's relationship with the Utah State University's Early Intervention Research Institute by participating in this project. This project assists communities and states in their efforts to integrate services for young children with special health care needs and their families into a more comprehensive, coordinated early intervention system. Consultants from Utah provided technical assistance in Jefferson County, one of the counties that had been involved in the original Opening Doors project. One of the group's priorities is the development of a common application/eligibility process.

Spectrum: The Spectrum Project is a personnel preparation outreach project from the Department of Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences at the University of Colorado-Boulder. Their purpose is to assist early childhood assessment teams, family members and higher education faculty in developing family directed, culturally competent assessment information sharing and planning processes. In December 1997, Spectrum training was provided in Kansas City to teams made up of family members, First Steps providers, service coordinators, Regional Center assessment teams, higher education faculty, and representatives of state agencies.

IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES RELATED TO EARLY INTERVENTION

Service Guidelines: Effective November 1, 1997 service guidelines were implemented to assist teams in determining appropriate intensity and frequency of early intervention services, provide equity in services across the state, and help the system achieve cost efficiency. These guidelines do not attempt to limit services for an individual child or limit the authority of the IFSP team. Rather, they afford the IFSP team the opportunity to clearly individualize services, develop an IFSP that reflects appropriate means to achieve the identified outcomes, and provide appropriate documentation.

The following policies/procedures were implemented based on the 1997 Re-authorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Natural Environments: Effective July 1 1998, DESE required IFSP teams to discuss and document the natural environments in which early intervention services shall appropriately be provided, including a justification of the extent, if any, to which the services will not be provided in a natural environment.
Transition Requirements: A representative from the local school district must attend transition meetings for children who are in transition from First Steps to early childhood special education.

Mediation: A formal mediation system was added to the procedural safeguards provided to families of children in First Steps to assist with the resolution of individual child complaints.

USE OF PART C FUNDS

	96 CAN	97 CAN	Total 96-97 CANS
Central Directory	8,573.20	141,707.74	150,280.94
Family Centered Practices Grants		99,197.61	99,197.61
Transportation	80,025.00	199,996.55	280,021.55
Dept. of Mental Health	55,596.00	1,655,166.80	1,710,762.80
Dept. of Health	1,093,011.19	1,726,489.37	2,819,500.56
Early Intervention Liaisons	(11,625.80)	144,382.27	132,756.47
Training & TA	(990.98)	103,513.51	102,522.53
Administrative Expenses		98,354.55	98,354.55
Committee Expenses		38,401.52	38,401.52
Total	**1,224,588.61**	**4,207,209.92**	**5,431,798.53**

ONGOING SYSTEMATIC CHALLENGES TO IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EARLY INTERVENTION SYSTEM

See section on Barriers, Challenges, Future Steps/Actions Related to Interagency Coordination.

DESCRIPTION OF STATE'S CREDENTIALING SYSTEM

IX. PERSONNEL STANDARDS

Following is an excerpt from Missouri's Part C Regulations regarding the state's credentialing system.

PERSONNEL STANDARDS (34 CFR 303.361)

Definitions

"Appropriate professional requirements in the State" means entry level requirements that:

1. are based on highest requirements in the State applicable to the profession or discipline in which a person provides early intervention services, and
2. establishes suitable qualifications for personnel providing early intervention services to children and families who are served by State local and private agencies.

"Highest requirements in the State applicable to a specific profession or discipline" means the highest entry level academic degree needed for any State approval or recognized certification, licensing, registration or other comparable requirements that apply to that profession or discipline.

"Profession" or "Discipline" means a specific occupational category that:

1. provides early intervention services to eligible children/families;
2. has been established or designated by the State; and,
3. has a required scope of responsibility and degree or supervision.

"State approved or recognized certification, licensing, registration, or other comparable requirements" means the requirements that a State legislature either has enacted or has authorized a State agency to promulgate through rules to establish the entry-level standards for employment in a specific profession or discipline in that state.

The highest professional standard by discipline for the State of Missouri are as follows. The requirements of all state statutes and rules of all state agencies applicable to serving children under this part were considered.

Profession	Highest Entry Level Academic Degree for State Approval
Audiology	Master's Degree and Certificate of Clinical Competency for licensure.
Certificated Occupational Therapy Assistant	AA degree or Occupational Therapy Assistant Certificate from an accredited school for occupational therapy assistants and current state licensure.
Counseling	Master's Degree in Guidance and Counseling or its equivalent for licensure.
Dietitian	Bachelor's Degree required for registration with the American Dietetic Association; no state licensure.
Nursing	Associate Degree in Nursing and state license.
Occupational Therapy	Bachelor's or Master's Degree or Certificate in Occupational Therapy from an educational program approved and accredited by ACOTE, the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education, and current state licensure.
Orientation and Mobility Specialist	Completion of an approved course of study in orientation and mobility and certification by the Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired.
Paraprofessional in Early Intervention	High school graduate with ongoing supervision and training by professionals who hold the highest professional standard in the State.

Profession	Highest Entry Level Academic Degree for State Approval
Physical Therapy	Bachelor's or Master's Degree in Physical Therapy from an educational program approved and accredited by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education, and current state licensure.
Physical Therapy Assistant	Associate degree from an accredited school for physical therapy assistants, and current state licensure.
Physician	Medical Doctor or Doctor of Osteopathy Degree for licensure. Specialized training in pediatrics is granted by the American Board of Pediatrics or American Osteopathic Board.
Psychology	Doctorate for state licensure.
Social Work	Master's Degree from an accredited program.
Special Education	Bachelor's Degree and documentation of meeting the competencies defined in the Certification for Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE).
Speech and Language	Master's Degree and Certificate of Clinical Competency for state licensure. Master's Degree for certification issued by State Board of Education.

All professions meet the highest standards as described above. Special instruction may be provided by teachers certificated in the following: early childhood special education, hearing impaired, visually impaired, mentally handicapped, severely developmentally disabled, and early childhood education (PK-3) or individuals who have a bachelor's degree in child development (also called Human Development, Human Ecology, or Child Development and Family Studies). All individuals who have a bachelor's degree in child development or who have certificates in hearing impaired, visually impaired, mentally handicapped, severely developmentally disabled, or early childhood education must document one year of experience with infants and toddlers with disabilities.

Early Intervention Assistants (paraprofessionals) may also be utilized to provide early intervention under the supervision of one of the following providers covered by a First Steps contract: Teacher for Special Instruction, Registered Occupational Therapist, Licensed Physical Therapist, or Licensed Speech Pathologist. The professional may subcontract with early intervention assistants who have completed at least 60 hours of college course work. (Individuals with a high school diploma may substitute experience with infants or toddlers with disabilities for all or part of the college requirement.)